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ABSTRACT

Over recent decades, comparative analyses of educational problems or policies have become more common. This paper, which focuses on Western European countries, argues that comparative studies that are carefully designed, conducted, and used are essential for the improvement of educational policy and decision making. Comparative analyses are becoming mandatory for many governments due to steadily increasing international communication and interdependence, which generates a growing need for standardization, consistency, and compatibility in all fields. Also the effects of "Europeanization" and accelerated sociopolitical changes in Eastern Europe must be considered. Given the central policy roles of governments in all countries, the state's evolving role is a high-priority concern. By exploring common, specific trends in different contexts and their respective implications, comparative studies can help elucidate the possibilities and limits for state and public agency improvement efforts. The functions of financing, administration and management, quality control, and regulation evolving in industrialized countries in Europe, America, and the Pacific are discussed, along with implications for educational planning. Planning must become less rigid; recognize "hard trends" and demographic changes; adopt flexible budgeting; and stress monitoring, regulation, and evaluation roles. Appendices present European Community education and training guidelines and community educational program highlights. (MLH)

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Educational policies in a comparative perspective: suggestions for a research agenda

by

Jacques Hallak

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Educational policies in a comparative perspective: suggestions for a research agenda

by Jacques Hallak

I. The case for comparative studies

(1) Can comparative analyses be helpful for educational policy-making?

Over the last few decades, analyses of educational problems or policies in a 'comparative perspective' have become more and more common. The central argument of this paper which focusses on Western European Countries is that, henceforth, comparative studies -- carefully designed, conducted and used -- are more than ever necessary for the improvement of educational policy and decision-making.

Before developing this argument in more detail, reference should be made to the types of analyses using a 'comparative perspective', and considering their respective merits and limits[1] :

- It is both dangerous and irresponsible to draw simplistic inference from superficial inter-country comparisons of educational systems. Nowadays, inter-country comparisons of educational indicators, for example of 'achievements' and 'performances' have become very popular, notably with a view to pinpointing the unfavourable position and the weaknesses of the education system of one country compared with the systems of others. To a certain extent, it may be useful, of course, for educational decision-makers, say, in the USA to conclude from cross-national comparisons that American high school students tend to have lower achievements in science than their Japanese or their Hungarian counterparts. It may be equally relevant for competent decision-makers in France to note that the proportion of young people leaving the educational system with no qualification is much lower in Japan, in the Federal Republic of Germany and in the Netherlands than in France. But, taken out of context, as frequently happens, such comparisons are generally misleading and are not legitimate. For example, it is not uncommon to hear or read from the media, that the fact that 90 per cent of young Japanese complete their secondary education explains why Japanese industry is far more performant than the French one. By inference, this suggests that to improve the performance of the French industries, one should increase the proportion of young pupils attending secondary school. The purpose of comparative studies is not to help find easy and simple solutions abroad for complex problems at home.

- It is equally counter-productive to take an entirely opposite view and consider that comparative studies are not relevant for policy-makers. Many specialists insist upon the 'non-transferability' of policy solutions from one country to the other, given the very specific interdependencies and consistencies between the educational system and the socio-political, economic and cultural systems which characterise each society. This argument is valid only up to a point. It is true to say that if the 'cultural gap' and the economic and social organisation system between societies are too great, it cannot be bridged by any common dimension of comparison. In all other cases, comparative

1. On this subject see: Noah, H. 'The use and abuse of comparative education', in *Comparative Education Review*, November 1984. See also, Broadfoot, P. et al. 'Teachers' conceptions of their professional responsibility : some international comparisons' in *Comparative Education*, Vol. 23, N°. 3, 1987.

cross-cultural studies can identify the potentials and benefits of international borrowing and adaptation.

- For decision-making purposes, perhaps the most useful analyses in a comparative perspective are done with the assumption that different countries often have common problems that they address (at least to a certain degree) in different ways. This is due to different modes of organisation of the educational systems and to different relationships among the actors showing different responsibilities. Comparative studies of this type can be most valuable insofar as they may help policy-makers to understand how common problems are addressed by different educational systems, to question the established national aims and options, and to broaden their perception of possible alternatives. Moreover, such comparisons may be used by decision-makers to identify certain long-term trends of their own national setting (institutional, socio-cultural and other factors) to be taken into account when they adopt strategies for reforming or improving their educational system.[2]

During the past 25 years, diffusion and dissemination of educational practices across national boundaries and the sharing of common objectives for education have already taken place and contributed to what could be considered as 'basic communalities' of educational systems. As a matter of fact, significant features of the contemporary educational systems of many European countries, North America or Australia -- such as the comprehensive secondary school, professionalisation of post-secondary education or training schemes promoting transition from school to work -- are inspired by models developed in other countries. One should recognise, however, that recent changes in a variety of areas are 'pushing' many governments, especially in Europe and the realm of OECD, to speed up their own problem-solving efforts by 'borrowing' and learning from the policies and policy implementation experiences of other countries.

(2) Why comparative analyses are becoming 'mandatory' for many governments

First, as a general worldwide trend, it should be recalled here very briefly that the steadily increasing communication, exchange and interdependence as well as the economic competition at *international level* generates a growing need for 'standardisation', 'consistency' and 'compatibility' in all fields, including those of education and human resource development. That means more communalities in aims and targets and more comparative studies of educational policies are needed in order to understand how to achieve them.

Secondly, 'Europeanisation' is another significant current trend, and is a serious challenge for educational policy-makers in the countries concerned.

The proximity of 1993 -- the date at which unrestricted movement of capital and labour within a single market should definitively be achieved -- has drawn the attention of European countries to the ways and means of promoting, as rapidly as possible, exchange and co-operation between enterprises and between all kinds of institutions and increasing the mobility and flexible use of academic and other types of trained manpower.

2. As a matter of fact, this is the basic working assumption of international and regional training programmes in educational planning and administration organised by universities and institutions like the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP).

The European Community has undertaken a whole range of special Action Programmes with these ends in view, namely EUREKA, ESPRIT and RACE (fostering joint research between institutions in different member countries), ERASMUS (phase I, adopted in 1987, 85 millions of ECUs; phase II, in 1989 with 192 millions ECUs. Mobility of university teaching staff and students), COMETT (phase I adopted in 1986 with 45 millions ECUs and phase II in 1982 with 200 millions ECUs. Fostering university/industry links), PETRA (training and transition from school to work for young people in difficulty or unemployed), and LINGUA (as of 1990 with 200 millions ECUs for 5 years), etc. See *Appendices 1-2.*[3]

Such programmes, however, can at best play the role of catalysts. In order to attain the objectives of the transnational mobility of students and labour, mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and degrees, qualifications and periods of study and training, and of increased industrial competitiveness through better trained human resources, it will be necessary to compare in more detail, and eventually harmonize to a certain extent, different sectors of education and training in the EC Member States.

Thirdly, the implications for educational policy of the accelerated socio-political changes in Eastern Europe should not be overlooked. For cultural and historical reasons, European countries -- including most East European countries[4] in spite of their differences -- obviously share a great number of educational issues, challenges and objectives, today:[5] continuation of school attendance beyond compulsory schooling by a growing majority of children, diversification of secondary schools, increasing numbers and proportions of people qualifying for entrance into higher education (whereas the number of study places available is often limited), and impact of New Technologies of Information on education[6] are typical examples of such trends. Reducing the still persisting proportion of school leavers without any qualification, enhancing the quality of general secondary education and the aquisition of general knowledge and skills in the framework of vocational training, bringing universities closer to the needs of regional development etc. are widely shared objectives of educational and human resource development. But to what extent different national educational policies have aimed at addressing these common challenges, will adopt convergent implementation strategies and similar institutional and organisational patterns, will have to be explored through comparative analyses.

Taking the problem of 'school leavers without qualification' as an example, Inset 1 indicates briefly, in a comparative perspective, trends of pupil and student flows characterising different national education systems which could inspire the action of policy-makers aiming to overcome this problem by learning from other national experiences.

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3. Eurydice, *Unité Européenne d'Euridice*, Brussels, Belgium. N°. 8, 1989.

4. Mitter W., (1979). *Secondary school graduations: university entrance qualifications in socialist countries*, Pergamon.

5. The programme TEMPUS adopted by the Commission of European Committees could be interpreted as reflecting this concern.

6. See Göttelmann. G., (1989). *Strategies d'Innovations technologiques et politiques educatives*, UNESCO:IIPE.

Inset 1

School leavers without qualifications*

There are striking differences in the structures of the education and training systems of France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. The distribution of pupils of the age group 14-24 by age, between general education, full-time vocational training, part-time vocational training and the labour market, illustrate the importance attached by France to general education, the UK to further training, Germany to the dual system and the Netherlands to full-time vocational training. By comparing the pupil flows between different components of the education/training system, the European Centre for Development of Vocational Training draws the following evidence :

- The longer the duration of training (full-time, part-time sandwich courses) the higher the mobility between training and education and the lower the proportion of school leavers without specialised training.
- The larger the access to the training systems, the lower the proportion of the school leavers without specialised training.
- The size of the general academic education has little effect on the number of school-leavers without specialised training.
- A very small proportion of school leavers re-enter the formal education training system.

From the comparisons, a number of inferences could be made. The authors of the study recommend :

- A less segmented and more flexible education and training system that would contribute to increasing mobility of pupils between the various components of the education/training structures.
- An increase of the duration of pre-service vocational training (both full-time and part-time).
- An expansion of the programmes of further training.

However, these suggestions should be examined from three additional angles, i.e., their impact on equity, their costs and modes of financing, and the labour market conditions.

* Source : CEDEFOP - Flash, No. 1/90. Special Berlin/Germany.

II. A different role for the State?

Given the central role that governements in all countries still play in the formulation and monitoring of educational policies, the evolving role of the State should constitute a priority area in comparative studies of educational systems. As a matter of fact, in many countries, increased attention is being paid to the question of the extent to which the existing involvement of the State in the financing, design, production, delivery and control of educational services should be maintained and how to improve its 'effectiveness' of intervention. By exploring common and specific trends in different contexts and their respective implications, comparative studies can help elucidate the possibilities and limits for the State and public agencies to perform major functions in the education sector better and differently.

The following comments will be focused on the functions of *financing, administration and management, quality control and regulation* as they are evolving in the education systems of industrialised countries in Europe, America and the Pacific (Australia, Japan, New Zealand).

(1) Financing

Several factors influencing the public education budgets, particularly the depressed economic setting in the 1980s, have led to a shift in the relative share of the authorities and private sources of financing education. The dominant converging trends of change which can be noted are both quantitative and qualitative: relatively less financial support from the State and more from local and private sources; less for upper levels of education from the State (especially higher education) under stagnation; less for capital investments and for non-salary costs; less grants and more cost recovery for upper levels of education and for training; and more attention to mechanisms of financing aimed at reaching particular targets such as: addressing the issue of equality of opportunity, producing incentives for increasing the contribution of the private sector (e.g., to the State/local financing of initial and in-service vocational training) or facilitating cost control, efficiency and accountability. Some countries are radically questioning the traditional mechanisms of financing education by the State and suggesting that public subsidies be given on a contractual basis to education entities after agreeing on their programmes. Still others are experimenting with a combined system of financing; for example, Australia introduced in 1989 the 'Higher Education Contributory Schemes' -- the so-called 'Graduate Tax' -- consisting of a combination of student fees and publically-funded student loans. It aims at recovering about 20 per cent of the average cost of higher education.

For researchers in comparative education, evaluating various strategies and instruments of educational financing adopted by different countries during the last decade will remain an important task, in spite of the growing number of studies which are being made available in this area. To be meaningful for educational decision-making, comparative analyses should, in particular, explore the concrete reasons for the recently changing strategies studied; examine the effects of those changes on student access, participation and educational outcomes; review their implications on costs and effectiveness in the operation of the education sector; and eventually assess the consequences on the labour market. Inset 2 illustrates the experience of industrialised countries in student loan programmes.

Inset 2

Student loans in higher education

A forum (September 1989) organised by the International Institute for Educational Planning examined recent experiences in the area of student loans in the USA, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. The following main conclusions were reached :

1. Several countries are introducing changes in student support in the 1990s because of :

- concern about increasing costs of existing systems of student aid;
- change from highly selective systems of higher education to 'mass' higher education requiring new forms of support;
- desire to *expand* higher education participation without imposing excessive burden on public funds;
- concern about *fairness* of existing systems.

2. Participation in higher education has increased in the 1970s and 1980s, but there is concern in several countries (e.g., the Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden) that too much reliance on loans will discourage low-income students. There is now a consensus in several countries that a *mix* of grant/scholarship and loan will encourage participation in higher education and several countries are moving towards a mix of 50 per cent grant 50 per cent loan, although some countries still favour greater reliance on loans.

3. There is widespread agreement that loans should not impose excessive burdens of debt. There is no agreement about what represents a 'reasonable' level of debt, but Sweden and the Federal Republic of Germany have recently increased grants to avoid excessive debt burdens. Evidence in the USA suggests that most students do not believe that current debt levels are too high, but there must be special provisions for those with very low incomes, or the unemployed. Most loan schemes allow for postponement of repayment if graduates' incomes are very low, and with this provision loan burdens at present do not seem excessive - graduates usually pay about 4/5 per cent of earnings to repay loans.

4. Falling birth rates in many countries mean a decline in the higher education age group. However, higher education enrolments are still increasing because of the increased proportion of school-leavers with qualifications for entry to higher education, the increase in participation by mature students, and increased student mobility due to development of study abroad/exchange programmes. Student aid policies must take account of these demographic changes, but changes in the labour market are even more important. Students' career choices are more influenced by wages/salaries, job opportunities and labour market conditions than by student aid. There is no evidence that student loans distort career choice*.

* See Woodhall, M. *Educational Forum Series* 'Student loans in higher education, 1 : Western Europe and the USA', IIEP 1990.

(2) Administration and management

The features characterising educational administration and management in a given country are obviously a result of national traditions and history, on one hand, and of the values and patterns of different models of organisation which presently dominate the public sector, on the other. The division of tasks and responsibilities between the State, local authorities, educational institutions and non governmental agents, therefore, offers a rather confusing picture in most western societies today. For example, in France, the training of teachers is the responsibility of the State, while responsibility for building secondary schools is that of the regions, and organising school transport the responsibility of the communes/municipalities. Higher education institutions are generally highly autonomous in their management, even in traditionally centralised countries. The private sector -- in particular, the industry -- plays a considerable role in many western countries (the Federal Republic of Germany is particularly significant but far from being the only example in this respect) in administering and managing initial and continuing vocational education and training programmes alongside an otherwise extensive involvement of the State in this sector.

Certain convergent trends in educational administration and management have taken place over the last two decades whose impact on the output and functioning of the educational systems concerned are still far from rigorously known. We need to look more closely at the following trends:

- *From centralised or decentralised administration to a hybrid administrative system.*[7] Both centralised systems, such as the French, and decentralised systems, such as the British, have in recent years tried to move towards what might be called 'hybrid' administrative systems, in which the management of activities is decentralised, and responsibility is given to individual schools and universities -- while the State has the role of the setting of educational objectives, norms and rules addressing national policy issues, and the monitoring of the overall education system and its broad components.

- *From a rigid concept and model of school management* inspired by bureaucratic centralism and governed by detailed rigid regulations, *to a far more open and flexible approach to school management* guided by general rules that leave substantial margins of interpretation and manoeuvre to school managers. In France, for example, the 'education projects' approach for secondary schools relies heavily on the 'producers' and 'consumers' of education in the definition of their targets and aims for each school year. In some countries, schools are encouraged to compete for excellence and achievement in the area of school management. If the former approach (i.e., the bureaucratic model) was quite consistent with the ideology of welfare state and the concept of education as a 'public good', the latter one (flexible management) illustrates the trend toward search for efficiency and greater reliance on market forces that prevail in the present day.
- *From predominantly rigid and unified delivery systems* of education and training controlled by the State or very few (specialised) institutions/agencies, to increasingly

7. Hallak, J., (1990). *Investing in the future: setting educational priorities in the developing world*, UNDP/UNESCO:IIEP, Pergamon Press, and Wirt, F.M. 'The chief education officer in comparative perspective', in *Comparative Education Review*, February 1988.

diverse delivery systems to which a wide variety and growing number of agencies and actors (that are not necessarily specialised in education services only) contribute on a more or less *ad hoc* basis. One may notably refer in this respect to the increasingly important role of public *and* private mass media in the production and dissemination of education programmes and materials (in the United Kingdom, for example).

For the *research community in comparative education*, there is a rich tapestry of topics for study inspired by the trends mentioned above. These studies could focus on the conditions and impacts of the changes affecting the role of the State in the administration and management of education. (For example, case studies and monographs which set out to analyse and review the ongoing experiences of countries moving toward 'hybridisation' such as the British experience of unifying the curriculum; evaluation of experiences of institutionally centred management in particular of universities in terms of modalities of implementation, cost effectiveness and impact on educational outcomes.)

(3) Quality control and regulation

It is well known that the purposes of evaluation could be grouped into two broad categories : administrative and educational. Administrative purposes which reflect management and resource concerns are seen as including accountability to: (i) society, (ii) funding sources, (iii) parents, and (iv) the schools as institutions. Educational purposes are mostly concerned with quality control and educational outcome in relation to the (i) teaching-learning process, (ii) curriculum, and (iii) disparities in educational achievement.

Although no systematic and comprehensive assessment is available, partial indications suggest that during the past decade, a few convergent but also some divergent trends can be noticed which reflect a gradual change in the concept of the role of the State, in these respect.

- Accountability to funding sources to parents and to the schools are more commonly suggested as administrative purposes of evaluation. This is quite consistent with the ideology of competition and regulation through market mechanisms and the need for improving efficiency in the use of resources under financial constraints in the public sector ; while accountability to society is perhaps less referred to.

- The curriculum in the broad sense (i.e. content, methods, evaluation methods) is being given increased attention in both traditionally centralised and decentralised systems; moreover, a growing involvement not only of independent bodies of experts, but even the public at large, through the mass, media is taking place in European countries; this trend is consistent with the notion of users' involvement and empowerment in educational matters, the role of the State shifting from actor in decision-making, to catalyst and regulator.

- Some countries have declared the importance they attach to educational purposes of evaluation (shifting emphasis in their concern from input to outcome) while others stress the need for higher accountability (where there is concern because the use of resources remains very much in demand). The trend is not clear and there seems to be a confusion between the 'rhetoric' and the 'facts'. However, there seems to be an

agreement for the need to strengthen the capacity of the State to regulate the system and ensure quality control (by using evaluation to that end) and at the same time for reducing its authority for direct management.

For the research community there is the challenging task of understanding and interpreting more carefully the trends and factors affecting the regulatory role of the State (in particular how the contradictory goals of *efficiency* and *participation* are reconciled) as well as the prospects and potentials of evaluation studies to that end.

III. Implications for educational planning

If comparing educational policies is to compare how decisions are prepared, how they are taken, how actions are planned and implemented, then comparative educational planning systems is essential. The role of the OECD in the evaluation and study of educational policies should be mentioned in this regard.

Planning has been defined as a process of reaching decisions (or policies) which will achieve stated objectives. Planning processes include ways in which policies are formulated and adopted and an assessment of the possibilities of successful implementation. Therefore, planning is not simply a matter of reaching decisions that will lead to success; it is, more importantly, discriminating between alternative policies with the intention of rejecting those that will not lead to the desired outcomes. Hence, the vital role of educational planning.

(1) Should we dispense with traditional educational planning?

- *A word of caution*

Predictive and rigid centralised or comprehensive educational planning has been repeatedly brought into question during the past decade culminating in a feeling of rejection generated by the events of recent months in Eastern Europe. The progressive shift in the role of the State which means a growing role of other actors in education weakened considerably the value of comprehensive educational planning which has been tried by many industrialised countries in Europe (including Finland, the Federal Republic of Germany and France). A greater reliance on market forces and freedom of choices contributed to change markedly the notion of a planning process which would fully control the development of the educational sector. As the Joint Federation-Länder Commission of the Federal Republic of Germany put it in 1982 :

> "... a comprehensive and complete alignment of both sectors (the educational and employment sector) to each other by State measures is neither possible nor intended within the context of our legal and economic system, which constitutionally guarantees free entry to educational institutions, free occupational choice, and free decisions by the social partners (unions and employers)."[8]

Finally, a lack of adequate provision to finance the quantitative expansion and qualitative improvement of educational systems of many European countries generated a loss of interest in educational planning even in societies - like France - with a long tradition

8. Deutscher Budestag (ed.), 1982. Bericht der Bundesgering aun stsowie zuon weiteren Verfahren der Bund-Länder-Komission für Bildungsplanning und Forschunjsförderung zur Fortschreiburg des Bildungsgesamtphens.

of planning. While in the case of an expanding system, planning fulfills an important function by providing a basis for legitimisation of the demand for more resources, in a stagnating or shrinking system, educational administrators and political agents are not inclined to provide information about reduced resource requirements (or on how to manage with less resources) because this would undermine their position in the political bargaining process and reduce their capacity for mobilising support from influential groups in the education sector (e.g., teachers' unions, parents' organisations, members of Parliament sitting in congressional committees in charge of education). This also explains why at the moment, the notion of 'strategic planning' which supposes as much a 'reactive' as an active educational policy seems to receive so much popular and favourable echoes among the specialists and the policy makers.

From a practical point of view, however, the commonly shared opinion that the political and administrative system should dispense with planning, i.e. accept a short-term adjustment and transformation of the educational system to the changed conditions in a period of contraction, and/or in a period of growing dispersion of responsibilities among actors outside the control of the State, and/or in a period marked by the value of competition and freedom of choice, cannot be regarded as a rational response to the problems with which the educational sector is and will be confronted. The widespread conviction that the problems will ease as the pressures on the educational system diminish -- or that these pressures will diminish sooner or later -- and that improvements will to a certain extent be achieved automatically, thereby making planning superfluous, proves to be incorrect when subjected to scrutiny. For example, the lack of planning and adequate programming of higher education institutions during the 1980s in France have produced today a fantastic pressure on the Ministry of Education and is generating investment decisions which could have been probably far less costly to implant had they been initiated in time.

- *What does the comparative study of demographic trends in Europe teach us?*

As a matter of fact, the importance of the so-called '*tendances lourdes*' -- or 'persisting tendencies' because of their long-term implications on the future of educational systems, should not be overlooked in planning activities. Because their implications are long term, their assessment is particularly useful and constitutes a key phase in educational planning. Ad the scope of these persisting tendencies could cover a large number of countries, their study on a comparative basis may prove extremely useful to planners and decision-makers.

'Persisting tendencies' may relate to a variety of factors and dimensions which affect the future of education systems. There are 'hard trends' in the fields of science, technology, communications and media, culture, religion and beliefs, environment, distribution of economic activities by sector, etc. Less obvious but just as important are changes affecting the modes of organisations of education systems ; in particular the changing role of the State. Rigorous studies of these trends and of their implications on the educational systems are needed. Unfortunately, if we leave out some speculative research work carried out by futurologists, very little is available in terms of likely trends to be taken into consideration when planning the future of educational systems. One important and relevant exception is the case of demographic trends. By taking as an example the changes affecting the

demographic context in European countries, it will be possible to illustrate the value of comparative studies of long-term trends on educational planning.

Demographic variables change slowly, but once a change takes place its implications on the educational systems remain effective for a long time, partly because of the time-lag between birth and end of compulsory education (say 12-14 years today in most industrialised countries); partly because once the consequences of demographic changes reach the school system, they will remain with it for a long time because they generate escalating changes affecting successively the three tiers (primary, secondary and tertiary) of the system.

Changes in the numbers of the 5-14 year old age-group, which is more or less entirely 'absorbed' in the educational system in all European countries, determines enrolments in the compulsory school sector. In pre-primary and post-compulsory education and training, educational participation must be added to the demographic factors as a second determinant of enrolments.

(i) More flexible budgets, structural adjustment of finance

According to OECD demographic projections, several European countries have experienced dramatic declines in the number of 5-14 year old pupils. This is true of Austria, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and the Netherlands which in ten years lost between 21.3 and 28.5 per cent of the total number of the children in the 5-14 year old age bracket. This has significant implications for the provision and allocation of resources. Similarly, the distribution of the teaching force by age is another demographic determinant of the use of resources (seniority, rate of turnover, position on the scale). Since increases in the education budgets cannot be expected to continue at the same pattern in the future, fiscal management will become a task of growing importance. *Additive* budgetary policy which characterised the period of educational expansion will probably be replaced by *redistributive* budgetary policy consisting of reducing or phasing out some budgetary items to finance expansion of others. This will require an increase of flexibility of the budget and of drastic reductions of what President F. Mitterand (France), called recently 'desuets' (obsolescent) items of the budget. Moreover, special attention will have to be paid to the distribution of responsibilities and financial burdens among the different entities in charge of education. The search for a realistic and balanced distribution of financial burdens among the 'producers' and the 'users' of education and for adequate structural adjustments of the education budget in response to heavy declines of enrolments is a major task for educational planners.

(ii) More emphasis on 'demand', less relevance of 'supply'[9]

Projections of educational participation for each age group are highly unreliable because of the large number of determinants, the relative influence of which it is moreover, often difficult to judge. This applies particularly to the structure of education and training at the post-compulsory level. In the expansionary phase of the 1960s and 1970s, the demographic effect was reinforced in most countries by a simultaneous increase in participation rates in post-compulsory education.

9. This section draws extensively from a report prepared for UNESCO : 'Prospective Trends in the socio-economic context of Education in European Market Economy Centres', by M. Weiss, H. von Recum, P.A. Döring, German Institute for International Educational Research. Reimers 1990 (undated).

The impact of the demographic decline on enrolments, which had already taken effect in the educational systems of some countries in the 1980s, has been alleviated or even over-compensated for by the further increase in educational participation. One year (at least) of post-compulsory education is now the norm in most countries. The constellation of conditions determining the increase in participation rates is historically unique and thus does not permit simple extrapolation in the future.

In those countries with a differentiated (selective) secondary school system, experts generally expect trends towards higher level qualifications to continue - among other things in view of the continually increasing demand for higher qualifications in the employment system. In France, this has even been made a policy objective in the school reform plan : the *Loi d'Orientation 1989* plans that 76 per cent of young people will leave school with a level of baccalauréat. Surveys conducted amongst parents in the Federal Republic of Germany also suggest that the trends towards grammar school education will continue. Admittedly, it is unlikely that the number of those with university entrance level qualifications (29.5 per cent of 18 year olds in 1988) will rise to keep pace with the growing aspiration among parents for longer studies. But the excess in capacity of the institutions of upper secondary education owing to demographic decline will make it more possible for these parental wishes to be realised in the future. This reflects a fundamental change in the possibilities for educational policy and planning for a supply-side regulation of educational demand, as was partially practised in the past expansionary phase. With the available capacity and sinking pupil numbers this strategy is increasingly less effective and demand-side factors, which are more difficult to forecast and for planners to anticipate, will assume increasing significance for education participation.

Putting it differently, capacity bottlenecks will in the future have little regulatory effect on participation, at least in those countries which are more strongly affected by demographic decline (a striking exception is the case of Turkey; though it may be true to say that it is generally so in many countries of Southern Europe). The gap between global supply capacity and total demand will increasingly widen. Competitions between the various education and training alternatives available may well increase, and when it comes to choosing, individual desires will become more easy to satisfy. This suggests a growing 'free choice' and market regulatory mechanisms for the planner to take into account.

On the other hand, increase in demand for participation may, in a small number of countries, maintain a planning approach predominantly 'supply oriented'. This will be the case when high youth unemployment encourages young people to remain longer in the educational system; efforts to acquire advantages in the competition for scarce jobs by accumulating training and qualifications, would reinforce this trend; and overall increase in demand may well more than compensate for decline in population.

(iii) More qualitative dimensions and more implementation concerns

The strong drop in birth rate which started in the 1970s will affect upper secondary and higher education in the 1990s and the following decades. With such a time lag, and lack of flexibility in the state bureaucracy, educational policy has found it remarkably difficult to adapt to the changing demographic trends. Admittedly, the demographically determined decline in pupil numbers generated 'mechanistic' qualitative improvements in some cases measured (improperly) by lower pupil-teacher ratios and that probably contributed to the

widespread opinions that the educational system will adapt automatically to the demographic decline and needs no policy interventions. This overlooks the fact that the decline in pupil numbers does have a number of negative implications which call for educational policy-makers to take actions and monitor them. As a matter of fact, the decline in births has had the effect of putting into questions many of the traditional structures, concepts, norms and principles which originated in the period of expansion. For example, the issues of maintenance of a differentiated educational infrastructure (especially in rural areas), school organisation, school and class sizes, of differentiation in curricula and teaching, of school location, of student transportation, of teacher mobility and development, etc., all demand new solutions. A process of unplanned adaptation will probably reach undesirable developments with several negative consequences (both qualitative and quantitative) for the educational system. Constructive responses to those issues and the avoidance of undesirable developments require that educational policy and planning - both quantitative and qualitative - should become more than ever closely involved in the management and monitoring of this process of adaptation.

(2) The role of monitoring, regulation and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation become (or should become) obviously one of the central features of educational planning in the 1990s. In this regard, many distinctions should be made to illustrate differing opinions as to the appropriate role of the State and other entities in education, the value attached to education and training in social and economic policies, and the changes which are likely to affect approaches to learning and training in the near future, in answer to technological progress and social change. The design, experimentation, development and adoption on a wide scale of monitoring, regulation and evaluation systems will continue to be an important area of study for the research community for the years ahead.

Yet these changes to materialize on a large scale will probably require time and painstaking effort. Take, as an example, the task of regulation which at present may be at best partially performed by the State and other partners involved in education; regulation means at the same time:

(i) quick adjustment to changes occuring within the school systems ; for example reorganisation of the curriculum, changing the quotas of admission;
(ii) adaptation to changes affecting the socio-economic environment (curriculum to technologies, participation in training schemes to changes in jobs openings);
(iii) transformation to respond to anticipated mid-and long-term changes.
(iv) reforms and innovations in response to analysis of diagnoses.

While (i) and (ii) could be implemented at the institutional level (school, university) and require a straightforward information system with basic data on trends, deviations, and feedback, (iii) and (iv) are clearly the responsibility of the State or other bodies in charge of regulating the education sector, and require sophisticated information systems which would predict changes, establish diagnoses, and include a fairly reliable warning systems.

(i) The role of the State and other partners

Different styles and kinds of monitoring and evaluation emerge when we compare concepts and practices prevailing in OECD countries. In those countries where the concept of consumer freedom of choice applied to pupils and their parents is taken for granted,

monitoring and evaluation activities seem to be strongly influenced in the sense that they are designed to (a) contribute to facilitate the State interventions to 'deregulate' the 'education market', and (b) be used as incentives to the schools to improve their competitive position and to promote their services to the interested public. In those countries where the concept of education as a 'public good' prevails, monitoring and evaluation systems would tend to be used as instruments for improving (from an efficiency and an equity point of view) the planning and management by the State of the educational sector. However, in actual fact, this distinction tends to be blurred by the growing confusion of views on the role of the State. The case of France is typically relevant in this respect. Up until the early 1980s, monitoring was highly structured and centralised, and evaluations -- more precisely examinations -- were used to control student flows in a rather selective system. After the adoption of the Law on decentralisation, some modest decentralisation of monitoring for lower levels of the education systems occurred; and growing autonomy of management in higher education institutions earned in 1968 was kept under control through very complex and 'efficient' financing mechanisms.[10] More significantly, while already in the early 1980s, some specialised educational reviews (*Le Monde de l'Education*) have started publishing proxy-indicators of performances (or 'standards') of higher education institutions (and more recently of lycées), very little was known on primary and lower secondary individual schools. Only in 1989 a national evaluation of young children was carried out by the Ministry of Education with the clear purpose not of encouraging competition among schools, but of assisting teachers and school headmasters in improving their methods of teaching and managing their classrooms.

Incidentally -- and this is relevant to students in comparative research -- while problems of evaluation and monitoring of the educational systems are of major concern everywhere, the actual practices of information gathering, feedback and storing of data vary enormously, very few countries indeed collect data on performances in an overall setting of decentralised decision-making systems in education. A number of countries appear to follow a somewhat different approach by using formal output evaluations as part of a strategy to improve the responsiveness of more centralised delivery systems of educational services. Finally, the larger group of countries continue so far to rely heavily on indicators or mechanisms concentrating on the inputs of the systems. International/regional initiatives to foster and stimulate co-operation are particularly opportune even if their results may be uncertain.

(ii) Education and socio-economic planning policies

The functions of monitoring and evaluation may include regular or periodic review of the educational sector in relation to the socio-economic goals of the countries. Such reviews could be carried out by different entities (whether or not the State plays a central role), but only in societies where there is a shared view that educational policy should be explicitly linked to social and economic strategies at the national level. Needless to say, there is a fairly broad consensus on the need for such explicit linkages in particular : to relate more school programmes and earlier needs to highly competitive job markets, to facilitate transitions from schools to work and vice versa, to retrain and update the employed adults, to establish mechanisms for stronger links between business, training institutions and

10. Law still forbids the raising of student fees; teaching and support staff are still appointed, paid and managed by the Ministry.

universities and to attach particular attention to key priority areas for both the economy, the social and the educational sectors (for example, 'special programmes for the poor'). Nonetheless, what is lacking -- and probably is unlikely to occur in the near future -- are more systematic and structured linkages at the 'macro level'. Given the methodological difficulties of comprehensive socio-economic planning, and the failures of past attempts in this respect, sectoral reviews for monitoring and evaluation with the purpose of strengthening inter-sectoral linkages will probably concentrate on certain key problematic areas.

Comparative studies of countries' experience in this regard may produce relevant information for policy-makers. Key problematic areas for studies may relate to 'basic communalities' of educational systems (see Part I).

(iii) Future approaches to learning

New approaches to learning and teaching are being experimented drawing from 'brain research', artificial intelligence, data bases, new communication technologies, and alternative delivery systems (out-of-school teaching-learning activities, i.e. home study, distance education, public broadcasting, specialised learning services, new frontiers to learning). Application on a wide scale of these new approaches will require rigorous and careful experimentation, design of monitoring systems for development and generalised use, and building in evaluation systems.

Here again, needless to say, the contribution of studies with comparative perspectives, both intro-and international, will be potentially very high. Such studies are part and parcel of a planning effort to prepare the adoption of future approaches to learning. They may draw lessons from on-going experiences, pilot projects or speculative work by futurologists.

IV. Concluding remarks

Comparative studies of educational systems can be useful for decision-making where they help identifying, beyond each national specificity, some common problems which are addressed differently in different countries. Hence, suggesting what can be done in each national setting and what should be the principles/criteria for/of action. In a world characterised by a growing interdependence among countries, consistency, more compatibility, and sharing of common educational objectives become necessary. That means more commonalities in aims and targets and more comparative studies of educational policies in order to understand how to achieve them.

Given the central role of governments in educational policies, and the significant changes in the division of labour between the State and the other entities involved in the education/training sector, a growing concern on the implications of this trend on the financing, management and administration, and quality control and regulation is shared by the research community in comparative education.

The value of educational planning should be reaffirmed. But the concept, purpose and methods of educational planning are being updated to respond to the changes affecting the educational sector and its socio-economic environment. We need more attention to the studies of long-term trends to facilitate improved monitoring of the adaptation required by the educational systems; more emphasis on demand for education and training without ignoring the value of planning the organisation and management of educational supply, more concern for quality and more to questions of implementation and feedback. Altogether, monitoring and evaluation is becoming a central feature of educational planning.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Education and training in the EC

Guidelines from the Commission for the medium term:
1989-1992

(Draft Communication transmitted to the Council)

In response to the statements and reactions received from the EC Council of Ministers for Education, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee regarding the "Medium-term perspectives for education in the European Community", the EC Commission sent its "Guidelines for the medium term: 1989-1992" to the EC Council of Ministers for Education in June 1989.

These Guidelines have been divided into seven sections:

1. Free movement of persons: qualifications:

   - Recognition of professional diplomas and vocational qualifications
   - Recognition of diplomas and periods of academic study (higher education)

   Application of Article 48 of the Treaty of Rome to the mobility of teachers.

2. Initial and continuing training:

   - Young people
   - Continuing education and training.

3. ERASMUS I and II and university development in the Community

4. Education and training for technological change:

   - COMETT I and II (1990-1994)
   - EUROTECNET II
   - New technologies in the school systems
   - Education and Science/Technology

5. Improving the quality of education systems through cooperation.

6. Foreign language teaching and training (LINGUA):

   - Foreign language teaching and learning
   - European schools

7. Promotion of youth exchanges

   - Exchange of young workers
   - "Youth for Europe"
   - School exchanges ("Classes 1992")

Appendix 2

Highlight of the community programmes in education

9.2.76 Adoption by the Ministerial Council of Education of a Resolution which defines the framework and broad orientations of the "Europe of Education".

1976-1985 Establishment of the **Education Committee** composed with high level Officials of member countries who meets regularly propose, guidelines, discusses with the Commission, and prepares the meeting of the Education Ministers. The Education Committee contributes to exchange of informations, organisation of meetings and seminars, and implements pilot experiments. At the same time, a number of resolutions were adopted on (i) equality of opportunity by sex, (ii) education for the handicapped children, (iii) fight against illiteracy, (iv) continuing education of teachers, (v) European dimension of education, (vi) schooling of children of "tziganes" and migrants.

Modest resources devoted to education: about ECU. 10 millions per year.

1985 Adoption by the European Council (composed of heads of States and Governments) of the Adonino report which recommends concrete proposals on such things as the teaching of languages, exchange between schools, cooperation in vocational/technical higher education and training.

Decision by the European Court of Justice (13 February 1985) that "all kinds of education/training that prepares skills for employment/jobs" is vocational and fall, under the responsibility of the Community. (By analogy, one could consider in the US the Community to be the Federal Government)

28.2.86 Adoption of the European UNIQUEALT which includes education components.

1986-1990 Adoption of COMETT, ERASMUS, LINGUA, TEMPUS.

Trends towards strengthening cooperation between national education policies and policies of the Community.

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IIEP Contribution No. 6

The central argument of this paper is that comparative studies -- carefully designed, conducted and used -- are more than ever necessary for the improvement of educational policy and decision-making. And given the central role that governments in all countries still play in formulating and monitoring educational policies, the author says that the evolving role of the State should itself constitute a priority area in comparative studies of educational systems.

By exploring common trends in different national contexts and their respective implications, comparative studies can help demonstrate the possibilities and limits for the State and public agencies to perform major functions in the education sector differently and better. In this context, the paper points to some examples from industrialized countries concerning (i) the financing of education; (ii) administration and management; and (iii) quality control and the regulation of education.

The paper concludes that the value of educational planning in all of this should be reaffirmed. But more attention needs to be paid to studies of long-term trends to facilitate improved monitoring of the adaptation required by the educational system. There should be more concern for quality and more to questions of implementation and feedback. Altogether, monitoring and evaluation are becoming a central feature of educational planning.

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